

the administration continues its efforts to promote freedom, peace, and security abroad.

CONFIRMATION OF WILLIAM COHEN TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, in my 8 years of service in the Senate, and in particular during my time on the Armed Services Committee and the Intelligence Committee, I have had the privilege and honor of working with Bill Cohen. His expertise and thoughtfulness, as well as his ability to put the national interests above partisan politics, have made him an invaluable asset to this body. Whether regarding arms controls, missile defense, or acquisition reform, Bill Cohen's independence and reasoned approach have resulted in passage of major pieces of legislation on highly complex and politicized matters. Those same qualities will enable our next Secretary of Defense to guide the Nation through an uncertain future, and to make the many difficult choices we face in reconciling protection of our vital interests overseas with ever increasing demands on our federal budget here at home.

Bill Perry has proven himself as one of the most capable Defense Secretaries ever, and Bill Cohen will have a remarkable legacy to follow. But I am confident he shares the same kind of dispassionate, in-depth analytic qualities and measured, even-keeled leadership qualities that will keep America safe well into the 21st century. I wish him much success in his new position.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

(Disturbance in the galleries.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Sergeant at Arms will restore order in the galleries.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW CABINET MEMBERS—SECRETARY MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AND SECRETARY WILLIAM COHEN

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I know there are a number of colleagues who wish to be recognized, and I will be very brief. I wanted to accommodate all of those in the short timeframe that we had prior to the votes, so I withheld comment at that time.

I congratulate both of our new members of the Cabinet on the strong support they received through the votes taken this afternoon. In the case of Madeleine Albright, I have had the opportunity to inform her of the Senate's vote and to personally congratulate her. Let me say how pleased I am with the overwhelming sentiment expressed by the Senate on both sides of the aisle.

Madeleine Albright is unquestionably qualified to be Secretary of State. She is one of our best foreign policy minds, particularly given the extraordinary

experience she has had in so many roles in her past. As a professor at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, Ambassador to the United Nations, serving as a counselor to the President on foreign policy, Madeleine Albright, as much as anybody else, has had the opportunity to be in the forefront of foreign policy in this administration. This vote, obviously, was quite historic. Madeleine Albright stands now as the first woman to be confirmed as Secretary of State in our Nation's history. I cannot think of a more appropriate honor to be bestowed on a woman of this caliber and with this degree of credibility. I commend her and commend the administration for nominating her for this most important position.

We stand ready to work with her in all the challenges that she now faces in all parts of the world given the heavy responsibility that she will face her new role as Secretary of State. I hope that we can demonstrate that politics will stop at the water's edge, as it has this afternoon in her confirmation. I look forward to working with her. And, again, let me publicly congratulate her on this historic occasion and on the overwhelming support demonstrated for her confirmation in the vote just taken.

The same could be said of our new Secretary of Defense. From the very outset of his 20-plus year service in Congress, Bill Cohen has demonstrated ability, independence, and extraordinary good judgment on a range of defense and intelligence issues. Through his work on the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, Senator Cohen has become a real giant in the formulation of public policy and someone to whom many of us have gone for counsel, advice, and direction as we have faced many very difficult issues. He has stood on this very Senate floor on many occasions to express himself clearly and unequivocally on the issues confronting this body that require very careful judgment.

I also congratulate Senator Cohen for his clear and very decisive response to a question on the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention. He made a compelling case for this vital treaty. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle were listening to the comments made by our new Secretary of Defense on the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention. His record in this Congress, including his testimony before the Armed Services Committee this morning, indicate why Bill Cohen is an extraordinary choice as our new Secretary of Defense. I look forward to working with him. I know that, again, on a bipartisan basis, Bill Cohen begins his tenure as our new Secretary with an appreciation for the friendships that he has created and the standing that he continues to have in our body with colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

A NEW RECORD FOR SENATOR BYRD

Mr. DASCHLE. Finally, let me just say, for just a moment, how pleased I was that the majority leader marked the important new record set by our distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia earlier today.

Senator BYRD, having served 38 years and 10 days in the Senate, has now become the fourth longest-serving Senator in U.S. history behind Senators Hayden, THURMOND, and Stennis.

He is a remarkable legislator. Many of us have called attention to his many, many records in this body now for some time.

I want to be among those to honor him once more, and to call attention to this most historic occasion.

Again, let me congratulate Senator BYRD on this important day, and again call attention to this milestone, and commend the many, many citizens of West Virginia who have shown such good judgment to send ROBERT C. BYRD to the U.S. Senate not once, not twice, but on seven different occasions.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you, Madam President.

I also want to thank the distinguished Democratic leader for his recognition of Senator BYRD of West Virginia.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, let me thank the Democratic leader for his comments expressing his approval of the fact that we have moved these two very important nominees very quickly through the process. We had indicated to the President that we would try to do that and we would try to act immediately after his inauguration to confirm these nominees. We will continue to work on our nominations that we receive from the President in an expeditious manner. I am sure there will be some that will take a little longer. But we wanted to do these to make clear our good faith and our intentions to work with the President so he could have his Cabinet in place, particularly his foreign policy and national defense people.

So thank you for your comments. We will continue to hopefully work that way.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM COHEN

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, if I could just briefly make some comments here about our good friend, the Senator from Maine, Bill Cohen, I know the Presiding Officer feels this way very, very strongly, and I know she is very proud of his confirmation.

I must say that over the course of my tenure in the Congress I have often